

BOOK REVIEW

MICHAEL J. BALICK, MICHAEL H. NEE, and DANIEL E. ATHA. 2000. **Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Belize with Common Names & Uses.** (ISBN 0-89327-440-2, pbk.). *Memoirs of the New York Botanical Garden*, Volume 85. New York Botanical Garden Press, Bronx, New York 10457-5126, U.S.A. \$42.34, 246 pp, 6" × 9".

This is the first floristic checklist devoted to the second smallest country (less than 200,000) in Central America, Belize. The first product to come from the collaboration between the New York Botanical Garden and various Belizean institutions, known as the Belize Ethnobotany Project (Sheldon et al 1997). Another volume, *The Ethnobotanical Diversity of Belize*, is in preparation. In this volume 3408 species in 1219 genera and 209 families are recognized with 1.2% endemism for this subtropical environment.

The design follows that of other *Memoirs of the Garden* with a preface, abstract, introduction (covering: geography, climate, vegetation, floristic composition, and endemism), a section covering classification and family sequence, and sections divided as such: Psilophyta, Lycopodiophyta, Polypodiophyta, Pinophyta, Cycadophyta, Magnoliophyta: Magnoliopsida, and Magnoliophyta: Liliopsida. These sections are followed by a bibliography and general index. For each plant covered in the checklist the authors provide the scientific names, synonyms, uses, references, common names, notes (e.g. taxonomic problems), habit, vouchers, types, and cultivation notes. The authors recognize nineteen categories for plant uses covering beverages, construction, dyes, fibers, edible products, animal forage, fuel, fumitory, gums, latex, medicines, oils, ornamentals, poisons, resin, ritual, spices, and tannins. A major strength of this volume is its erudite foundation in the historical botany of Belize, acknowledging the contributions of major collectors (indigenous and Western) over time and its framework for designing the Belize Ethnobotany Project and future research.

This is a must-have resource for those researching the conservation biology, biogeography, ecology, economic botany and ethnobotany of Meso-America. I would recommend it to students and professionals alike for its close attention to botanical and biogeographical detail and emphasis on local culture and uses. All libraries with a Latin American biodiversity focus should have a copy, as well as all institutions supporting tropical botany programs.

REFERENCES

- SHELDON, J.W., M.J. BALICK, and S.A. LAIRD. 1997. Medicinal Plants: Can Utilization & Conservation Coexist? *Advances in Economic Botany* vol. 12, New York Botanical Garden Press, Bronx, New York.
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